FAX TO: PHIL HOOD
Fax Number: 415 / 573-5131

Except the (key) pieces?

One page only.
Hood **94.12.2** d7
page 1

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One P

Hi Phil--

Thanks for your interesting news & letter.

Yes we WOULD INDEED like a subscription straight to this office.

Articles for you now in the pipe--

ONE BATTERY PLEASE. AND ONE CASE.

Why should anyone have to carry a separate portable telephone, computer, audio recorder and video camera? It's all digital now anyhow (except the video just yet), so why not put it in one machine?

Some argue that you can't combine them because they're "different functions"-- but that's metaphysics. If you put it in one box, it's one function. But the real problem, of course, is how to make it function together sensibly, and nobody seems quite ready to face that. "Making sense" and "software design" probably never appeared together in the same sentence until now. (Even a video camera has two "record" buttons, one for when it's a camera and one for when it's pretending not to be.)

Japan is awesome, fast, big, efficient, smart, colorful, clean.
Coming back to the United States from Japan is like going to Mexico from the United States:

I LOVE THIS COUNTRY! Notes from a Gaijinheimer

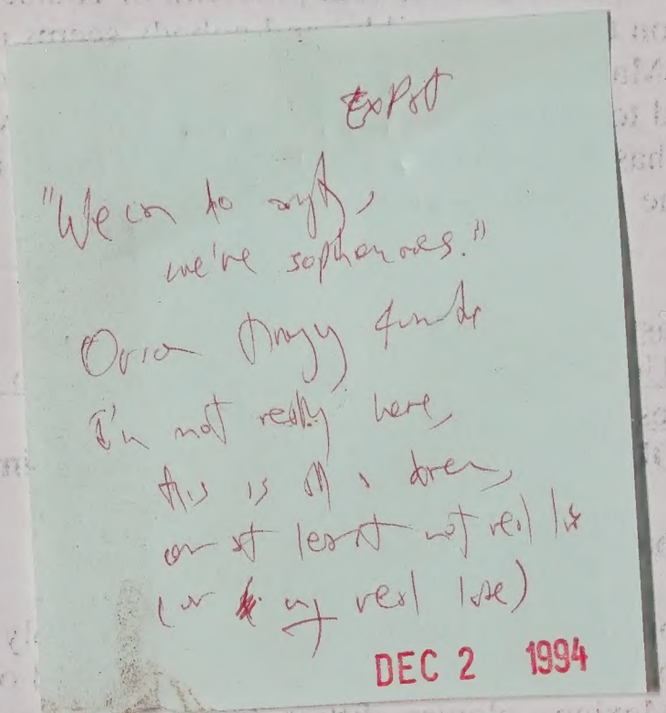
I was Not Prepared for Japan. No one is.

Japan is awesome, fast, big, efficient, smart, incredibly clean. Going home to the USA, it's hard not to be reminded of the old stereotype of Mexico-- slower, dirtier, lazier, and way behind.
slow, dirty, lazy, and way behind.

The first time I came here was 1980, I think, and it was like seeing 70mm when the most you'd ever seen was TV.

Theodor Holm Nelson *Founder of Interactive Media* *Founder of Network Publishing*
Project Xanadu® **On-Line Storage and Publishing Services**
3020 Bridgeway #295, Sausalito CA 94965 415/ 331-4422 Fax 415/ 332-0136

Sapporo HyperLab **Doshin Maruyama, 8F • 2-20, Odori Nishi 20-chome**
Chuo-Ku, Sapporo-shi, Hokkaido 064 JAPAN
Tel. (from the States) 011 81 11 621-1133 Fax (from the States) 011 81 11 621-1170


Expat
"We can do anything,
we're sophomores."
Orion Onyx Gupta
I'm not really here,
this is all a dream,
or at least not real life
(or is my real life)
DEC 2 1994

Tokyo. Take London, Paris, New York and Los Angeles, except for the slums, and that's Tokyo.

It's immense. Fifty miles in two directions. Ten Times Squares. Two Naughty Districts. Several Fashionable Districts. One palace the size of a large college campus.

And the thing you're least prepared for: IT'S SAFE! That's right. You are SAFE ANYWHERE IN JAPAN, AT ALL HOURS. You can walk home all across Tokyo in the middle of the night, except of course it'll be day when you get home.

Now I'm a city boy, I feel pretty safe at night walking most places people are afraid of, but it's not a picnic. Your senses are keen, you watch your shadow, you step into the street if anyone approaches and let no one get near, etc.

None of that here.

In the States, when you walk at night and feel safe, you feel RELATIVELY safe. That's different. Here you feel FUNDAMENTALLY safe.

But then you realize they're afraid of YOU. Walking on the sidewalk, even in broad daylight, some will run a little bit, just to get a safe distance away.

You are a gaijin.

"Gaijin" means literally "foreign person," but it has connotations. The gaijin, especially the American gaijin, is thought to be sensual, creative, uninhibited and dirty. (Rather like the stereotype Americans used to have of the French.)

(Interestingly, they do not particularly notice any difference between black Americans and white Americans. We are all *gaijin*.)

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This is not all bad. They are drawn to us. One of the first ads I saw on Japanese television showed a Japanese man touring in Alaska, flagging down a passing train and ending up drinking with Americans on the train. They want our respect and companionship. This is good, especially for us.

We, we gaijin, are protagonists in the ads.

When that stops, we'll be in trouble.

The characters in the comic books are all drawn as NORDIC! Unless they are caricatures, or show someone getting angry, at which time they suddenly look very oriental.

What's the matter with them? Don't they know that the real world is Europe and America?

Ads

Comic book Nordics

12-year-old Nordic girls being ravished

Actually they do seem to suspect that, kind of.

There are no guns here and no gambling. I like both of those facts a lot. There are no illegal drugs, but the booze flows like water.

The chocolate! The pastry! The ice cream! The way the women dress!

The goofy architecture! The delirious English all over everything! (My favorite so far was a leather team jacket embroidered on the back to say WORLD SPINASH. (What can it mean?) But there's also the candy bar called Crunky, the mad mad names of bars and hair salons and cafés [TK]. In the night-

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Theodor Holm Nelson Founder of Interactive Media Founder of Network Publishing

Project Xanadu® On-Line Storage and Publishing Services

3020 Bridgeway #295, Sausalito CA 94965 415/ 331-4422 Fax 415/ 332-0136

Sapporo HyperLab Dosshi Mineyama, 8F 2-20, Odori Nishi 20-chome
Chuo-Ku, Sapporo-shi, Hokkaido 064 JAPAN
Tel. (from the States) 011 81 11 621-1133 Fax (from the States) 011 81 11 621-1170

life district of Sapporo, a restaurant called Food Zoo is right near some sort of establishment called B'2nd. I haven't found out how to pronounce that yet.

The grape-and-cabbage juice, the

Now consider this Inscrutability business.

These people are Exact, Intense, Subtle, Clever, Warm and Sweet.

Sapporo's the size I expected Tokyo to be...

To me, one of the most interesting subjects in the world is Japan.

Most Americans aren't even INTERESTED!

The Meiji period, from about 1870 to 1910, is one of the most astonishing periods in history. They went from diapers and combat cutlery to railroads, universities and being a colonial power, all in the blink of an historical eye.

The culture hasn't changed.

It's about GETTING THINGS DONE.

Optimism
Energy
Genkitude

disciplinary cutlery
endho

My favorite word is "genki," which means energetic and enthusiastic. You don't say "How are you?", you say, Are you genki?

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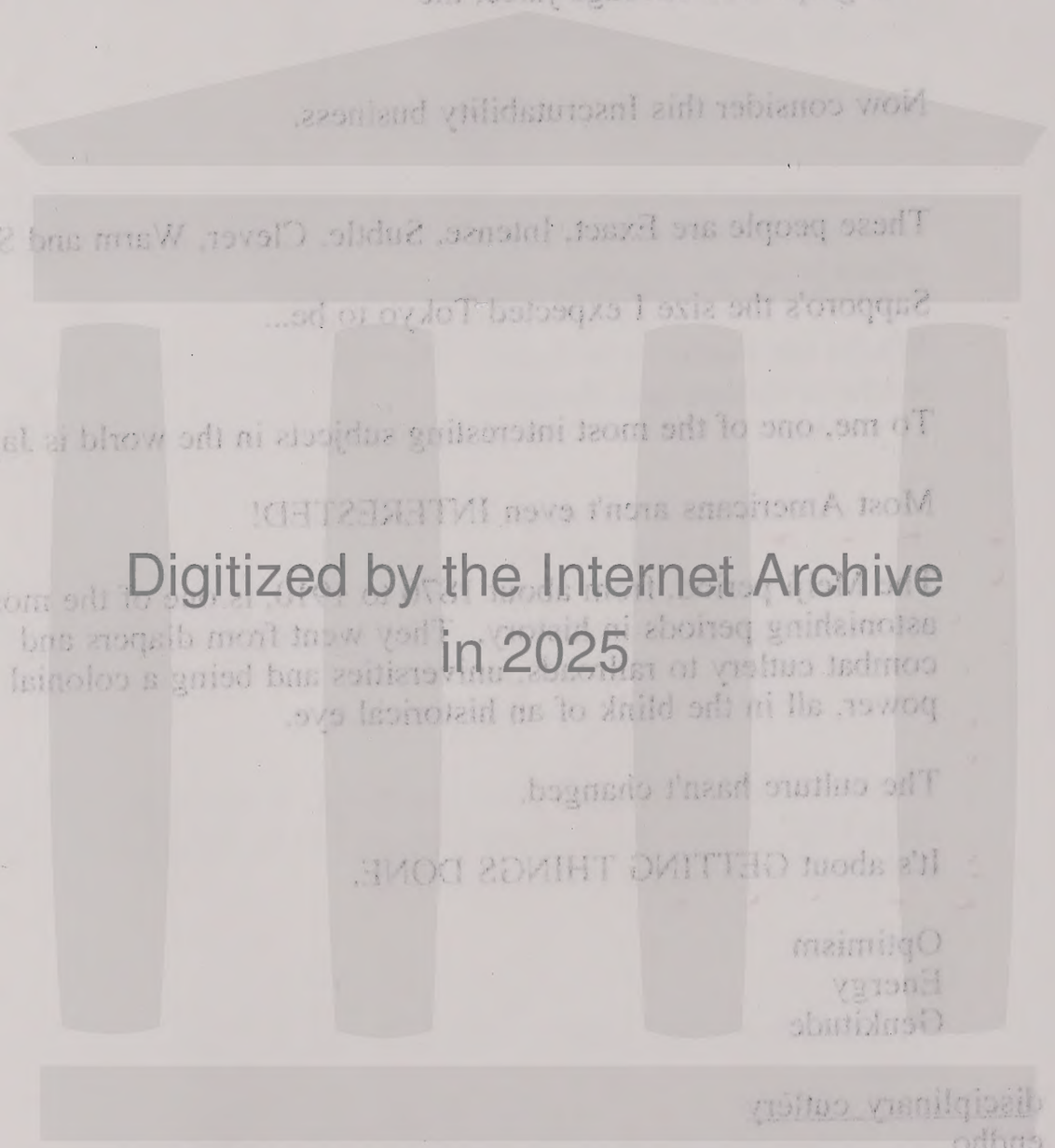

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Ex-Pat on the Back

When I was a kid I mourned having missed the Lost Generation, Paris in the twenties, getting drunk with Fitzgerald and Hemingway and seeing all the important new stuff first (Picasso, *Ulysses*, sex).

The expatriate thing

Well, I'm now living the life of an expatriate and finding that a lot of that same atmosphere is alive and perkin' in foreign climes.

Now, I haven't been to Prague ...

Amsterdam and Japan

But I have looked in on expatriate communities here and there, and they have a lot in common.

Backslapping no-tomorrow friendliness.

Alcohol.

In the old days they said that the local informant for your home government was the biggest backslapper in town, who hung out in bars and knew everybody. Of course there's none of that now. These days your home government can't afford it.

Your local CIA informant, who hangs out in the bars and is the biggest backslapper

the great Hallowe'en party in Tokyo...

WHY I HATE THE MACINTOSH

Theodor Holm Nelson *Founder of Interactive Media* *Founder of Network Publishing*
Project Xanadu® **On-Line Storage and Publishing Services**
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What I like about the Macintosh: you can have more than one screen and long file names. What I don't like about the Macintosh: anything else.

Admittedly, the PC is fascist. But the Macintosh is artsy-fascist.

It's not that I hate the people or the intention, or

It's the smugness, the we-know-what's-best-for-you-ness, the cutsie-pooness, combined with the stupidity and oppressiveness.

You can't just LOOK AT THE DATA. No no, tut tut, you have to have The Application that Created It. So the application developer owns you, you can't bypass the combined wisdoms of the Apple corps and their piemen.

Rival developers are scared into keeping hands off that format, or at least they have a second-class status.

It goes off on demented errands of its own, and you can't say Never Mind, you just have to live with long unexpected delays, wait and wait, like a dog waiting for its person.

Insult-to-injury: when the software does something really stupid, you get a little box where you have to click "OK," where you ought to have a four-letter expletive option. No, you have to click OK, like a scolded kid being humiliated in school by a prissy schoolmarm.

Sometimes, you have to sit waiting to say "OK" over and over

You have to sit and watch, because every little thing that goes wrong will require another approval from you (sure it's okya, sure, sure), and it won't proceed to the NEXT tut-tut until you approve the LAST one.

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page 6

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Project Xanadu® On-Line Storage and Publishing Services
3030 Bridgeway #295, Sausalito CA 94965 415/ 331-4422 Fax 415/ 332-0136

Sapporo Hyperlab Dosbin Maruyama, SP • 2-20, Odori Nishi 20-chome
Chuo-Ku, Sapporo-shi, Hokkaido 064 JAPAN
Tel. (from the States) 011 81 11 621-1133 Fax (from the States) 011 81 11 621-1179

The "Clipboard," which is just like any other clipboard, except: (1) you can't see it, (2) it only holds one item, (3) anything you put on it destroys the previous item, (4) if you hit Squiggle-V it spews its contents out at the cursor position. (The V stands for Very Intuitive. Thank god for Metaphors as a way of understanding software.).

I meant to say that the Macintosh clipboard is just like any other clipboard in ALL OTHER RESPECTS, except there aren't any. (Certainly not from ME.)

They say all you have to know to use the Macintosh is how to click a mouse, oh sure. They forget to mention all the special keystrokes, Norton Utilities and Speed Disk, SCSI tool software, Preferences Versus Extensions, applet conflict analysis, PostScript versus TrueType, and Installation Hell.

(The Macintosh mouse is really a three-button mouse, except they hid two of the buttons on the keyboard.)

Unless you're watching carefully, it saves your file in some insane place.

That's the joke. In the time it takes to master all the inane quirks of the Macintosh, you could have learned something better.

If you ask me, what could possibly be easier and better than the Macintosh, the only appropriate response is a four-letter word.

Unix.

UNDERSTANDING THE TAPE-RECORDER PROBLEM

Theodor Holm Nelson *Founder of Interactive Media* *Founder of Network Publishing*
Project Xanadu® **On-Line Storage and Publishing Services**
3020 Bridgeway #295, Sausalito CA 94965 415/ 331-4422 Fax 415/ 332-0136

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I tried to tell them when I visited Sony headquarters that they didn't understand about tape recorders, but they wouldn't listen.

For instance, there's this thing called a Pause button. The function of the Pause button is accidentally to keep a recording from being made that you really wanted to have. It has no other function. The first thing I do when I buy a tape recorder is tape the Pause button open.

Dictation takes between 10:1 and 20:1 to transcribe, i.e., ten to twenty hours for every hour of recording. To proofread it takes another ten hours, because you have to read it over and run the tape. Even if you try to proof only the suspicious parts of the typing, FINDING the audio that corresponds to the suspicious parts takes a long long time.

So here's what we need:

A way of sending compressed audio by e-mail to a service bureau in India or the Bahamas, where people are literate and inexpensive. They listen, type, and e-mail back the keystrokes.

A way they can mark the audio in detail: for instance, a way to mark each sentence, digitally, to correspond to the keystrokes of the sentence.

Software that lets you jump randomly to that part of the recording to check the keystrokes.

That's the solution. See the problem?

I have notes for other pieces but they haven't gotten sorted out of the mound yet.

All the very best,

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page 8

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Tel. (from the States) 011 81 11 621-1134 Fax (from the States) 011 81 11 621-1179

HO d7 ----------

To someone who asks, What could be easier and better than the Macintosh, I have a simple four-letter response.
Unix.
If you ask knowledgeable people whether a much better operating system is possible, you tend to get a four-letter response.
I can't describe it, except it's kind of like the what first Woodstock was like, but then I can't describe that either, at least not in this space.
in school having to act polite under humiliating circustances while the computer acts like a prissy schoolmarm.
You can't just leave it by itself, for (say) big file transfers;
UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM: DICTATION

HO d6 ----------

The possibility of a better operating system is a four-letter word.
And oh yeah.
It doesn't have any respects from ME.
the various special keystrokes you need to know,

HO d5 ----------

The possibility of a better operating system is a four-letter word.
But when I say to people that I think perhaps a much better operating system is possible, I get a four-letter response.

ENDLINE_____ STAY OFF HERE

Theodor Holm Nelson *Founder of Interactive Media* *Founder of Network Publishing*
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HO 95 ~~~